

O K L A H O M A C O N S E R V A T I O N CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

Volume 56, Issue No. 3 March 2010

OACD State Meeting "The Best Hard Time"

The 72nd Annual Meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) was held at the Reed Conference Center in Midwest City, Okla., Feb. 21-23. The theme of the meeting, The Best Hard Time reflected the idea that in the midst of the hard times of a declining state budget there have been significant conservation accomplishments in the past year. A \$25 million bond for conservation combined with more than \$16 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) federal stimulus initiative is resulting in a record period of OCC and conservation districts putting conservation practices on the ground. In addition, NRCS reported delivering more than \$81 million dollars in the past year through federal conservation programs. These positive developments were tempered by the challenge of declining state funds to support the day-to-day operations of conservation districts. Conservationists were encouraged to maximize all state and federal funds to continue the indispensable work of conserving Oklahoma's vital resources.

Three candidates for Oklahoma Governor spoke at the meeting's Monday luncheon. The candidates were Lt. Gov. Jari Askins, Attorney General Drew Edmondson and state Sen. Randy Brogdon.

Awards were presented to honor outstanding conservation activities.

Dan Lowrance and Fredia Rice Named to Conservation Hall of Fame

Dan Lowrance of Duncan, Stephens County Conservation District board member, and Fredia Rice, also of Duncan and secretary at the Cotton County Conservation District, were named to the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame.

Lt. Gov. Jari Askins presented the award to Dan Lowrance, and praised him for doing well in following in the footsteps of a national conservation pioneer, Nolen Fuqua. Lowrance replaced Fuqua upon Fuqua's retirement from the Stephens County Conservation District board of directors in 1990. Fuqua was nationally recognized as being instrumental in the formation of the state and national conservation associations and for pioneering upstream flood control and other vital conservation programs.

In addition to serving on the Stephens County Conservation District board, Lowrance is currently serving his second five-year term as Area IV Conservation Commissioner, representing 18 conservation districts in the southwest part of the state on the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Gov. Brad Henry originally appointed Lowrance in 2004 and reappointed him in 2009.

Lowrance has served as president, vice president and area director on the OACD executive board. Lowrance also served as chair of the National Watershed Coalition, a coalition of local sponsors of upstream flood control projects. Lt. Gov. Askins commended Lowrance for championing the upstream flood control program at local, state and national levels.

Fredia Rice was named to the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame as a "Friend of Conservation." OACD President Trey Lam presented the award, noting that Fredia had worked for the Cotton County Conservation District for 20 years. She has been a strong supporter of OACD's causes, Lam said, and was instrumental in the forming of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees (OACDE) and serving as president of that organization from 1997 to 2002. She has represented conservation district employees at local, state and national levels. Promoting profession-

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Our vision:
Responsible care for Oklahoma's natural resources.

Our mission:
To conserve, protect and restore Oklahoma's natural resources, working in collaboration with the conservation districts and other partners, on behalf of the citizens of Oklahoma.

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Conservation Calendar

For more events and information, click on "Calendar of Events" at www.conservation.ok.gov

Conservation Commission Meeting,
April 5, Oklahoma City

Oklahoma Envirothon,
April 6, Lake Arcadia, Edmond

Dust Bowl Symposium,
April 10, Guymon

Southern Plains Farm Show,
April 15-17, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
May 3, Oklahoma City

National Land & Range Judging Contest, May. 4-6, Oklahoma City

Prescribed Fire Day at the Capitol,
May 10, Oklahoma City

Memorial Day Holiday, May 31

Conservation Commission Meeting,
June 7, Oklahoma City

Forestry and Wildlife Camp,
June 7-12, Beaver's Bend State Park

Conservation Commission Meeting,
July 1, Oklahoma City

Independence Day Holiday, July 5

Blue Thumb Training for Volunteers,
July 13-14, Geary

OK Invasive Plant Council Annual Meeting, July 14, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Aug. 2, Oklahoma City

In our thoughts...

Matt Gard, Major County CD director and OCC Area I Commissioner and chairman was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident Feb. 28. He underwent surgery and has entered a rehabilitation hospital.

Bob Heidlage, OCC/AML project engineer and NRCS retiree, passed away on Feb 16.

Hal Clark, Cimarron County CD director and former OCC Area I Commissioner, had hip replacement surgery in January.

Willis Milton, retired NRCS district conservationist, passed away Feb. 23 at age 92.

Jackie Guerrero, wife of Gilbert Guerrero, NRCS assistant state conservationist, Field Operations, Zone 2, had surgery and is recuperating at home.

Kenny Babek, NRCS retiree, lost his father Leon Babek on Feb. 16.

Congratulations!

Edie Brown at Washita CCD has a new, fourth grandchild. Paxstan Paul Schachle, born Feb. 9, is the first child for Edie's daughter Amy.

Lanny Miller, NRCS assistant state conservationist, Field Operations, Zone 1, and wife Marly have a new granddaughter, Avery RaeAnn Tetik, born Feb. 22.

Conservation Day at the Capitol 2010

Awards Presented for Conservation, Education and Communication

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) and other sponsors presented awards to outstanding conservationists and conservation educators during Conservation Day at the Capitol on March 8. Awards were also presented to members of the press and conservation districts for outstanding efforts in spreading information about conservation. The various awards were cosponsored by Chesapeake Energy, the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma and the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation.

In the awards ceremony that took place in the Governor's Blue Room, presenters included Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts President Trey Lam, Oklahoma Press Association (OPA) Executive Vice President Mark Thomas, and Oklahoma Conservation Commission Executive Director Mike Thralls. In addition, representatives from Chesapeake Energy, the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation and the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma were present to help present awards. Lt. Gov. Jari Askins spoke to the approximately 100 present, emphasizing the value of the work of conservationists to Oklahoma and assisted with award presentations. Several honorees also received Legislative Citations from their home area state senator or representative. Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach and Sec. of the Environment J.D. Strong also attended.

The **OACD Conservation Awards** are presented according to three categories — Outstanding Conservation District, Outstanding District Director and Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator.

Grady County Conservation District received the **Outstanding District Award**, cosponsored by Chesapeake Energy. Matt Clark, Chesapeake Energy, and Trey Lam presented the award.

Rodney Hern of Wakita, on the board of directors of the Grant County Conservation District, received the **Outstanding District Director Award**, cosponsored by the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation. Shan Ingram, Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, presented the award.

Neal Otto of Ponca City received the **Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator Award**, cosponsored by the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma. Otto is a cooperator with and was nominated by the Kay County Conservation District. Jay Pruet, Nature Conservancy, presented the award.

In addition, five teachers from across the state, one in each Congressional district, received Outstanding Conservation Educator Awards cosponsored by OACD and Chesapeake Energy. The recipients were Dana Hamersley, Sperry High School, Tulsa; Helen Fisher, Haworth Public Schools; Tina Rogers, Canton Public Schools; Odessa Bacher, Jefferson Elementary School, Norman; and Colleen Smith, Southeast High School, Oklahoma City. Matt Clark, Chesapeake Energy, and Trey Lam, OACD, presented the awards.

Excellence in Communication Awards were presented to two conservation districts and three newspaper employees for outstanding efforts to support and promote conservation. East Woods CD was honored for Outstanding Public Information Campaign. Beaver County CD was honored for a year-long series of full page ads. Bridget Nash, Enid News and Eagle, and Mitch Meador, Lawton Constitution, were honored for outstanding features. Kelly Bostian, Tulsa World, was honored for an outstanding broadcast feature. Mark Thomas, OPA, and Trey Lam presented the awards.

During the day approximately 30 display booths were presented in the Capitol Fourth Floor Rotunda by a number of the state's 87 local conservation districts, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and other partner agencies and organizations. The displays featured diverse conservation activities across the state that address local natural resource needs.

Awards & Recognition

Wes Shockley, OCC/WQ water quality specialist, was recognized at the February Conservation Commission meeting for being named Employee of the Quarter.

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alism among conservation district employees has been among her highest priorities, Lam said. She spearheaded several fundraising projects for youth activities and is known for her salesmanship abilities.

For many years Fredia has assisted with the National Land and Range Judging Contest in which nearly 1,000 high school students — FFA and 4H members — from

across the nation come to Oklahoma to compete. In that role she has served as an outstanding ambassador for the state, Lam said. In addition to her duties with the conservation district, Fredia is involved with many of the civic projects in Walters.



Dan Lowrance and Lt. Gov. Jari Askins



Fredia Rice and Family

Virginia Kidd Receives Governor's Commendation

Virginia Kidd of Poteau received a Governor's Commendation on Feb. 22 at the OACD Annual State Meeting.

Kidd has served on the board of directors of the LeFlore County Conservation District since 1986. In 1996 Gov. Frank Keating appointed her to serve as Area V Commissioner on the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Gov. Keating reappointed her in 2000 and Gov. Brad Henry reappointed her in 2005. In June 2010 she will retire from that post having completed three five-year terms. Prior to her service at the Conservation Commission Virginia served nine years on the Department of Human Services Commission.

Jeanette Nance, Governor's liaison, presented the Governor's Commendation that read:

"Governor's Commendation is hereby presented to Virginia Kidd in appreciation of your more than 22 years of public service to the State of Oklahoma, 14 of which have been spent championing the cause of natural resource conservation in southeast Oklahoma as Area V Conservation Commissioner, and for your 24 years of service on the LeFlore County Conservation District board of directors."

Three Receive OACD President's Award

Jeanette Nance of Edmond, agency liaison for Gov. Brad Henry, received an OACD President's Award as did state Sen. Mike Johnson and Rep. Ken Miller. OACD President Trey Lam presented the awards.

Lam said that in serving as Gov. Henry's liaison to the Conservation Commission for the last seven years, Nance understands the importance of conservation to the state and takes those issues seriously. In the flooding events of 2007 and several emergency situations involving flood control dams, Nance served as point of contact within the Governor's office. She made sure that the Governor and his

emergency management team were kept informed of the status of those situations. Following that period, the Governor championed the conservation bond for the purpose of repairing the damages incurred by the conservation infrastructure, Lam said.

"Despite the number of agencies for which Jeanette serves as Governor's liaison, she finds time to be a regular at many of our conservation events around the state," Lam said. "She is a quality public servant who is most deserving of this recognition," Lam added.

State Sen. Mike Johnson of Kingfisher and State Rep. Ken Miller of Edmond also received OACD President's Awards. Lam said that Sen. Johnson, as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Rep. Miller, as chairman of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, had helped pass legislation in the 2009 state legislative session that authorized the bond issue for conservation projects. The \$25 million bond package has made possible the repair and rehabilitation of flood control dams and other conservation infrastructure severely damaged by weather events in 2007. Those repairs are underway currently, even in light of severe state budget cuts, thanks to proceeds from the bond. With proceeds from the bond to use as state match, Oklahoma was able to qualify for additional federal money to help rebuild the conservation infrastructure. Lam thanked Sen. Johnson and Rep. Miller for their leadership and assistance in conserving the natural resources of Oklahoma.

Coleta Bratten Named OACDE Employee of the Year

Coleta Bratten of Taloga was named Employee of the Year by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees (OACDE). Bratten has served as secretary at the Dewey County Conservation District for 12 years. She has also served in the office of treasurer on the OACDE board of directors for several years.

In presenting the award, OACDE President Bradley Hamilton said Bratten gives outstanding service in her job at the conservation district and to the OACDE board of directors. In addition she engages in activities including grant writing to obtain conservation equipment, promoting the conservation district's programs, coordinating local Women in Agriculture meetings, locally-led conservation meetings, land and range judging contests, and serving as chair of the local Resource Conservation and Development Council.

"She has also shown that she will not hesitate to go beyond the call of duty when the need arises," Hamilton said. "When a terrible wildfire last year put lives at risk in northwest Oklahoma," Hamilton said, "Coleta went beyond the call of duty by going door to door, warning people in homes surrounding the district office in the town of Taloga of the approaching danger."

"For her outstanding loyalty to the community and her conservation family, Coleta is certainly worthy to be named OACDE Employee of the Year," Hamilton said.



Virginia Kidd and Jeanette Nance



Bradley Hamilton and Coleta Bratten

Murray County CD Honors Jack Penner at Annual Meeting and Dinner

Murray County CD held its 55th Annual Meeting and Dinner March 9 at the Murray County Expo Center in Sulphur. The district awarded its Friend of Conservation Award to Jack Penner in recognition of 42 years of service on the district board. Penner served as OCC Area II Conservation Commissioner from May 24, 1993, to June 30, 2002. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame in 2002.



In the photo, from left, are John Cagle, district chairman; Jack Penner; Jack's son-in-law and daughter Riek and Becky Thompson; son and daughter-in-law Harris and Vickie Penner with granddaughter Amanda Conley; and Mike Thralls, OCC executive director.

GIS Day at the Capitol

The 16th Annual GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Day was held March 10 in the second and fourth floor rotundas of the state Capitol.

GIS Day provides an opportunity for representatives from all over Oklahoma to demonstrate for the Legislature how federal, state, county and municipal agencies use this incredible technology every day to better serve the public.

In the photo, from left, OCC staff members Ben Pollard, assistant director; Kim Tweed, executive secretary; and Kelly Mockabee, administrative programs officer; get a demonstration from a representative of the Oklahoma County Assessor's office on information available from the County Assessor's website.



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2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 160, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-4201
Published by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

